

GOING GREEN: UNPACKING GENERATION Y'S SHIFT TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD IN SOUTH AFRICA

Sharp K.L., Synodinos C.*

Abstract: Given the rise in the demand for organic foods around the globe, South Africa has witnessed an increase in the demand for both organisational practices that are safer and more sustainable, as well as organic products. Given the increased demand for organic products, it may be assumed that the prices associated with organic products should start to witness a price reduction, simultaneously increasing the number of organic products being purchased. Consumers' purchase intentions concerning organic products may be influenced by their health consciousness, environmental knowledge consumers possess, their subsequent environmental concern, their attitudes towards organic products, their subjective norms and their perceived behavioural control. As such, this study aims to determine the factors that influence the purchase intentions of South African Generation Y consumers towards organic food products. The sample for this study was taken from across the nine provinces of South Africa and included 500 Generation Y consumers. The data was collected using a market research organisation. The target market for this study constituted South African Generation Y consumers, ranging in age from 18 to 35 years. As per the findings, health consciousness, environmental knowledge, attitudes towards organic products and perceived behavioural control positively influence organic food purchase intentions. However, subjective norms had a non-significant influence. Finally, the environmental concerns of Generation Y consumers negatively influenced organic food purchase intentions. These results are somewhat perplexing as the findings go against the current literature in some instances. As such, South African marketers and organisations may have to re-evaluate their organic product offerings to this cohort.

Keywords: South Africa, Generation Y, purchase intention, organic food

DOI: 10.17512/pjms.2024.30.2.16

Article history:

Received February 24, 2024; *Revised* March 20, 2024; *Accepted* April 12, 2024

Introduction

Owing to the increasing demand for healthier food, environmental awareness and consideration for the consequences of environmental deterioration, there is an increasing inclination towards purchasing organic and chemical-free products (Parashar et al. 2022). As such, consumers are altering how they make food-related

* **Kirsty-Lee Sharp**, North-West University, Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, Workwell, South Africa;

✉ email: Kirstylee.Sharp@nwu.ac.za,

ORCID: 0000-0002-4858-9593

Costa Synodinos, North-West University, Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, Workwell, South Africa;

✉ email: costa.synodinos@nwu.ac.za,

ORCID: 0000-0001-5770-535X

purchases, resulting in increased awareness regarding organic food products. This change in consumer behaviour may be attributed to consumers' health concerns, natural taste, environmental issues and future self-preservation. Moreover, consumers have become more conscious of their current lifestyles. As a result, they have begun to make significant changes to their daily lifestyles and purchasing habits, resulting in a higher adoption rate of organic food products amongst others (Junsawang et al., 2022; Chetioui et al., 2023; Kamboj et al., 2023; Streimikiene, 2024).

Organic products describe food products that have been minimally processed to maintain the integrity of the food being produced while simultaneously ensuring that the food products were not exposed to any artificial ingredients, preservatives or irradiation (Chetioui et al., 2023). As such, organic products may be classified as products that are developed through processes and cultivation techniques that are environmentally friendly, where both the production and the processing of products are taken into consideration (Ferreira and Pereira, 2023; Paul and Rana, 2012; Sing and Verma, 2017).

For a product to be deemed “organic”, the organisations who produce such products need to ensure that all the required standards for organic agriculture, namely the transportation, processing, production methods, packaging and distribution standards, are adhered to (Kamboj et al., 2023; Sing and Verma, 2017).

In South Africa, organic farming encompasses the production of food crops and livestock that is not harmful and is in line with nature conservation efforts. As such, organisations that engage in organic food production and farming are responsible for ensuring that South Africa's natural resources are preserved as much as possible. As such, these organisations need to ensure that they use water in the most effective and efficient ways possible, create water-wise crops, engage in humane livestock management and invest in soil quality improvement, to name a few (South Africa Online, 2021).

According to Bhalla (2020) and Dziuba and Szczyrba (2023), the global consumer market is witnessing a rapid increase in the demand for organic food products. Moreover, South Africa is experiencing increased demand for organic food products and safer, sustainable business practices. Organisations that wish to survive and thrive in the changing consumer market need to take cognisance of the newly witnessed environmental movement and its significant effect on consumer markets. Given the ever-increasing demand for organic products, it is believed that the prices being charged for organic products will begin to decrease, which could result in consumers purchasing more organic food products. Other factors may also affect the purchase intentions towards organic products, such as health consciousness, environmental knowledge, environmental concern, attitudes towards organic products, subjective norms and perceived behaviour control. This raises the question of what factors influence the purchase intentions of the South African Generation Y consumer in relation to organic food products. Consequently, this paper aims to investigate which factors influence organic food purchase intentions among

Generation Y consumers in South Africa. This includes investigating Generation Y consumers' health consciousness, environmental knowledge, environmental concern, attitudes towards organic products, subjective norms, perceived behaviour control and purchase intentions in relation to organic food products.

This paper will provide a literature review delineating the environmental knowledge consumers possess, their subsequent environmental concerns, their attitudes towards organic products, their subjective norms, their perceived behavioural control, the relationships between these factors and purchase intentions and the Generation Y cohort. The paper will outline the research methodology, sampling methods, data collection and the instrument used to gather the data. The study results are then outlined, followed by the conclusion and future research suggestions.

Literature Review

In addition to the absence of chemicals, organic food products may be beneficial in enhancing an individual's health through consumption while considering environmental impact (Wolfson, 2019; Parashar et al., 2022). Consequently, as consumers' concern regarding food safety increases, so will the likelihood increase that they will develop positive attitudes towards organic food products (Tandon et al., 2021). Moreover, Su et al. (2022) propose that health consciousness shapes young consumers' attitudes, which results in organic food purchase intention.

Zsóka et al. (2013) define environmental knowledge as the amalgamation of knowledge an individual has concerning current environmental issues. According to Zahari and Esa (2016), the more a consumer identifies with environmental degradation, the more likely the consumer will purchase environmentally friendly products. As such, environmental knowledge is proposed to be a positive correlating factor towards organic food product purchase intentions (Polonsky et al., 2012; Zsóka et al., 2013; Almossawi, 2014; Yadav and Pathack, 2016; Heo and Muralidharan, 2019; Szczepańska-Woszczyzna et al., 2024) which may lead to pro-environmental behaviour.

According to Gray et al. (2019), consumers' environmental concerns may be directly attributed to individuals deemed as educated, where there is an increased likelihood of an individual earning a higher disposable income being more inclined to engage in pro-environmental behaviour. Simanjuntak et al. (2023) found that the more concerned consumers are about environmental sustainability, the more interested they are in purchasing organic products. Consequently, consumers' purchase intentions towards organic food products may be positively and directly influenced by their environmental concerns.

Based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the more likely an individual is to develop a positive attitude towards a particular behaviour or situation, the greater the chances an individual will be to behave in a particular manner (Ajzen, 1991). Similarly, Cherry (2021) postulates that when an individual exhibits a positive attitude towards engaging in a particular behaviour and faces an obstacle of some

nature, the individual may develop a negative attitude toward the particular behaviour.

Harjadi and Gunardi (2023) highlight that when consumers possess positive attitudes towards the environment, it is demonstrated through their consumption choices regarding products and services. Given the health and personal benefits of consuming organic food products, consumers tend to have positive attitudes towards organic food products (Sedera et al., 2023). As such, Harjadi and Gunardi (2023) found that attitudes influence consumers' eco-friendly purchase intentions, including organic food products. Additionally, Su et al. (2022) found that attitude is positively linked with young consumers' purchase intentions towards organic food products.

Brookes (2023) proposes that subjective norms encapsulate the views of individuals in reference to the views of other individuals of a particular behaviour. This includes the attitudes of family, friends and colleagues. As such, it is not what other individuals think but our perceptions regarding other individuals' attitudes. Ham et al. (2015) highlight the importance of taking subjective norms into account when investigating the purchase intentions of consumers regarding organic food products. Azjen's theory of planned behaviour (1991), stipulates that should an individual feel that they can control their current situation/circumstances (perceived behavioural control), there is an increased possibility that the individual will behave in a particular manner. Compared to traditional food products, organic products are known to be more expensive (Asare-Bediako, 2015). Additionally, organic food products may not be readily available in different locations, which suggests that even though consumers have the financial means to purchase organic products, they may struggle to source them even though they are higher priced. Furthermore, this may be due to the reduced lifespan of organic products due to the absence of preservatives. Consequently, if a consumer possesses a high degree of perceived behavioural control in relation to purchasing organic products, the consumer will be more prone to purchase organic products (Zayed et al., 2022).

According to Parashar et al. (2022), consumers with a strong orientation for health consciousness have higher intentions to purchase organic food products. Simanjuntak et al. (2023) suggest that environmental knowledge can be an important factor influencing purchase intention towards organic products. Wang et al. (2020) found that consumers' environmental concern has a positive influence on organic food purchase intention. Ham et al. (2015) indicate that the more positive consumers' attitudes are, combined with their subsequent subjective norms and the greater their perceived behavioural control is regarding environmentally oriented behaviour, the stronger their intentions will be to engage in environmentally orientated behaviour. Given the ever-increasing demand for organic products, it is believed that the prices being charged for organic products will begin to decrease, which could result in consumers purchasing more organic food products. In addition, the health consciousness of consumers, the environmental knowledge consumers possess, as well as their subsequent environmental concern, their attitudes towards organic products, their subjective norms and lastly, their perceived behavioural control may

also influence the consumers' purchase intentions about organic food products. Consequently, this study aims to investigate the factors that influence Generation Y consumers' purchase intentions concerning organic food products in South Africa. Markert (2004) classifies the Generation Y cohort as individuals born between 1986 and 2005; this puts them between 19 and 38 years in 2024. This cohort represented approximately 41 percent of the population within South Africa in 2024 (Statistics South Africa, 2024). Given that the Generation Y cohort makes up a large portion of the South African population, they represent the future consumers for the country and its economy (Strydom et al., 2021).

These individuals are striving to develop lifestyles that are environmentally sustainable in nature (Cheng, 2022). As such, Strydom et al. (2021) found South African Generation Y students to be highly concerned and knowledgeable concerning environmental issues. Consequently, for organisations to be successful in their marketing efforts focused on this cohort of consumers, there is a need to develop authentic brand messaging and brands that support environmental and social causes (LaFleur, 2023).

According to Bevan-Dye and Surujlal (2011), individuals within this cohort who possess a tertiary education increasingly fulfil the roles of influencers and trendsetters. They are also known for their opinions and ability to find employment and secure above-average earning power, which contributes to significant increases in their subsequent disposable incomes. Organisations that wish to capture these consumers must highlight their efforts of being socially responsible, including giving back to communities, developing sustainability programmes into their daily operations and engaging in environmental conservation (Luger et al., 2022).

Based on the preceding literature review, the following model (Figure 1) was proposed to determine the factors that influence the purchase behaviour of South

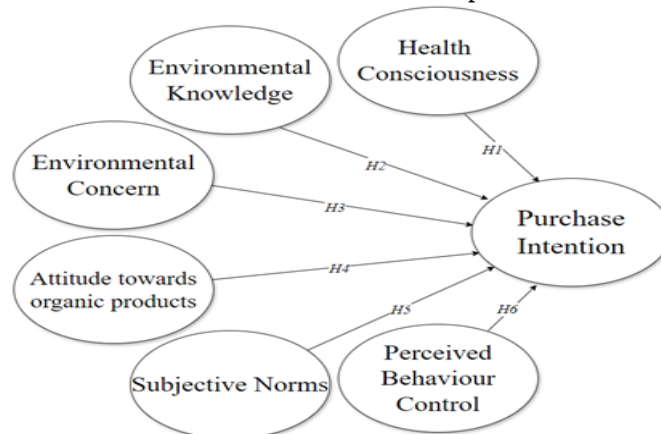


Figure 1: Proposed model
Source: Own elaboration

African Generation Y consumers towards organic food products. Furthermore, the figure outlines the proposed hypothesis stipulated in the proceeding section.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

H₁: Health consciousness has a significant positive influence on Generation Y consumers' purchase intentions towards organic food products.

H₂: Environmental knowledge has a significant positive influence on Generation Y consumers' purchase intentions towards organic food products.

H₃: Environmental concern has a significant positive influence on Generation Y consumers' purchase intentions towards organic food products.

H₄: Attitude toward organic food has a significant positive influence on Generation Y consumers' purchase intentions towards organic food products.

H₅: Subjective norms have a significant positive influence on Generation Y consumers' purchase intentions towards organic food products.

H₆: Perceived behavioural control has a significant positive influence on Generation Y consumers' purchase intentions towards organic food products.

As such, the main purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influence the purchase intentions of South African Generation Y consumers towards organic food products.

Research Methodology

A descriptive research design, using a single cross-sectional analysis, was used to conduct this study. As such, data was collected from participants at a single point in time instead of a longitudinal study, which collects data from participants more than once at different time periods (Shukla, 2010). The target population for this study constituted South African Generation Y consumers between 18 and 35 years of age. The components of the target population included South African consumers via the database of a marketing research company. A convenience sampling technique was employed to conduct this study. The study employed the services of the internationally renowned market research company to gather the data. Owing to the significant number of participants in the company's database, the response rate is usually 100 percent of the sample size. The data was collected over a three-day period and the age parameters were set to range between 18 and 35 years of age. The sample size chosen for this study constituted 500 South African Generation Y consumers, which was based on studies previously undertaken by Yin et al. (2010) (sample size: 432), Liang (2016) (sample size: 507), Hansmann et al. (2020) (sample size: 620) and Wang et al. (2020) (sample size: 518). As such, the sample size of 500 participants was deemed viable for the purpose of this study.

Measuring Instrument and Data Collection Technique

Employing the use of the online survey method, this study made use of an electronic self-administered questionnaire. The electronic questionnaire was uploaded to market research company's portal, where it was distributed for completion to 500 participants who met the sample specification criteria, namely South African

individuals between the ages of 18 and 35. The questionnaire was made available for a three-day period or until the 500 target sample was reached, whichever came first. The measuring instrument used in this study was adapted using various validated and published research. The questionnaire constituted two sections, namely Section A, which included all relevant demographic data and Section B, which comprised the latent factors pertaining to the measurement model influencing South African Generation Y consumers' purchase intentions regarding organic food products. To determine the subsequent health consciousnesses, environmental knowledge, environmental concern and attitudes towards organic food products of South African Generation Y consumers, the validated scales of Mostafa (2007) and Yadav and Pathak (2016) were used, respectively. The subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and purchase intentions of South African Generation Y consumers were measured using the scales of Fielding et al. (2008), Kim and Choi (2005) and Mostafa (2007), respectively.

The chosen tool for capturing the responses of the participants was a Likert scale, based on a six-point range, including strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Before participants participated in the study, they were given a cover letter which outlined the purpose of the study, highlighted all relevant contact information of the researchers and assured participants that all data would only be used in a statistical nature and that their information would remain anonymous.

The study's data collection process underwent stringent ethical procedures to ensure the anonymity of participants. The study's researchers followed North-West University ethical guidelines, and as such, the Ethics committee of the Economics and Management Sciences department awarded the study the following ethics number: NWU-00567-20-A4.

Research Results

The multivariate statistics executed in this study used IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS), version 29. The multivariate statistics used to answer this paper's research questions included outlier statistics, internal-consistency reliability, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM).

Outlier Statistics

A 100 percent response rate is quite uncommon in social sciences or any research setting for that matter. Thereupon, outlier statistics were calculated to detect any unconventional responses present in the data set. Outlier responses can take the form of lower or higher deviations when compared to the general population's recordings/opinions (Pallant, 2013). This study made use of the common Mahalanobis statistic for outlier detection. Based on a seven-factor variable model, any Mahalanobis statistic larger than 24.322 (chi-square value for $\alpha=0.001$ at 7 df) was deemed an outlier. The responses that were deemed outliers were deleted from the data set. To perform the analysis, the case number of the data set was presented as the dummy dependent variable, while the measurement scale's constructs were

set as independent variables. Table 1 below denotes the cases with the highest Mahalanobis statistic values.

Table 1. Outlier statistics

		Case Number	Statistic		Case Number	Statistic
Mahal. Distance	1	185	54.997	11	6	31.647
	2	128	54.997	12	434	30.616
	3	224	50.951	13	263	29.342
	4	400	46.663	14	152	28.284
	5	144	46.422	15	227	28.282
	6	341	43.162	16	413	27.280
	7	334	39.278	17	364	27.280
	8	179	35.575	18	408	26.790
	9	156	33.799	19	275	26.514
	10	291	33.547	20	160	24.860
				21	84	23.237
*Note bold cases were deleted						

Source: Own elaboration

The outlier analysis in Table 1 showed that 20 cases reported Mahalanobis statistic values greater than 24.322 (chi-square value for $\alpha=0.001$ at 7 df). These 20 cases were deleted as they exceeded the recommended threshold, leaving 480 cases in the data set for statistical analysis.

Internal-Consistency Reliability and Descriptive Statistics

Using a six-point Likert scale, descriptive statistics were used to capture the data set's characteristic traits. The measuring statistics included weighted average means and the internal consistency reliability was conducted, making use of the Cronbach alpha coefficient. The results are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and reliability analysis

	N	Means	SD	Items (n)	Cronbach alpha
Health consciousness	480	4.768	.975	3	0.844
Environmental knowledge	480	4.633	.841	5	0.844
Environmental concern	480	5.249	.671	3	0.701
Attitude toward organic food	480	4.938	.735	4	0.891
Subjective norms	480	4.795	.885	3	0.783
Perceived behavioural control	480	5.081	.705	5	0.808
Purchase intention	480	4.780	.879	3	0.882

Source: Own elaboration

The means for all measuring constructs produced values above 4.00, where the highest recording was that of environmental concern (mean = 5.249), while the

lowest mean recorded was that of environmental knowledge (mean = 4.633). These results indicate that Generation Y consumers have positive viewpoints towards organic products in South Africa.

Cronbach values above 0.70 were recorded for all the measuring constructs. These reliability results ranged from good to excellent reliability and as such, the proposed measuring model's constructs are said to have attained internal consistency reliability. The following section displays the study's correlation analysis.

Correlations Analysis

A Pearson product-moment coefficient correlation analysis was undertaken to establish nomological validity amongst the measuring constructs. Furthermore, this analysis aids in the detection of multicollinearity between constructs. The correlation matrix is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation matrix

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Health consciousness	1						
Environmental knowledge	.63**	1					
Environmental concern	.54**	.40**	1				
Attitude toward organic food	.44**	.57**	.38**	1			
Subjective norms	.49**	.60**	.21**	.54**	1		
Perceived behavioural control	.48**	.64**	.51**	.62**	.53**	1	
Purchase intention	.60**	.59**	.35**	.50**	.45**	.57**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Own elaboration

Table 3 shows that statistically positive correlation coefficients were recorded for all measuring constructs at the $p = 0.01$ level. Therefore, it may be inferred that nomological validity is present in the data set and with no values exceeding 0.90, there is no evidence of multicollinearity between the measuring constructs (Malhotra, 2010).

The data set has provided valid and reliable results regarding data descriptives, reliability and validity. As such, the data set meets the requirements for conducting structural equation modelling and the proposed model can be tested using SEM. This analysis is presented in the next section.

Structural Equation Modelling Analysis

The proceeding section outlines the SEM analysis conducted on the data set. This analysis includes the measurement model and structural model.

Measurement Model Analysis

The measurement model of this study has been validated as a seven-factor model in the previous study of Sharp and Synodinos (2023). The study's results showed that the measurement model had 351 sample moments and 73 estimated parameters. This

left 278 degrees of freedom (df), a significant chi-square at 718, 027 and a probability level equal to 0.000.

The model produced no problematic estimates and the relationship between each indicator and latent factor was statistically significant. The model was deemed reliable as each latent factor recorded Composite Reliability (CR) values of over 0.70. Furthermore, each factor produced Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values greater than 0.50, except for perceived behavioural control and environmental concern. This may be attributed to the size of the SEM model, however, as both were approaching the 0.50 threshold, there was no real cause for concern (Malhotra, 2010). Regarding the study's discriminant validity, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio values were calculated. Each of the HTMT ratio values computed figures below the 0.85 threshold. Therefore, the measurement model has discriminant validity (Voorhees *et al.*, 2016; Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The model fitted well with indices producing values over 0.90 and below 0.08, including IFI = 0.936, TLI = 0.924, CFI = 0.935, RMSEA = 0.057 and SRMR = 0.051. With a measurement model that is reliable, valid and possesses a good fit, it may be concluded that it is safe to conduct a structural model for analysis (Hair *et al.*, 2014; Malhotra, 2010). The structural model for the study is in the proceeding section.

Structural Model Analysis

Owing to the good model fit of the measurement model, the data could be subjected to structural equation modelling. The structural model aimed to determine factors affecting Generation Y consumers' purchase behaviours towards organic food products. The model consisted of the following independent variables, namely health consciousness (F1), environmental knowledge (F2), environmental concerns (F3), attitudes towards organic food products (F4), subjective norms (F5) and perceived behavioural control (F6). These independent factor variable relationships were tested towards the dependent variable of purchase intentions of organic products (F7).

The structural model identified a significant chi-square value of 718.027 ($p=0.000$), with 351 sample moments and 278 degrees of freedom. Due to the sensitivity the chi-square experiences from large sample sizes, additional incremental fit indices were examined to assert model fit. The chosen incremental fit indices all recorded values above the minimum recommended level of 0.90. The indices include IFI = 0.936, TLI = 0.924 and CFI = 0.935. In addition, the model's RMSEA (0.057) and SRMR (0.0518) values were below 0.08, indicating that the model fits well. Once model fit had been achieved, the proceeding step was to analyse the path coefficients (β) proposed for the study. The path analysis can be found in Figure 2 below.

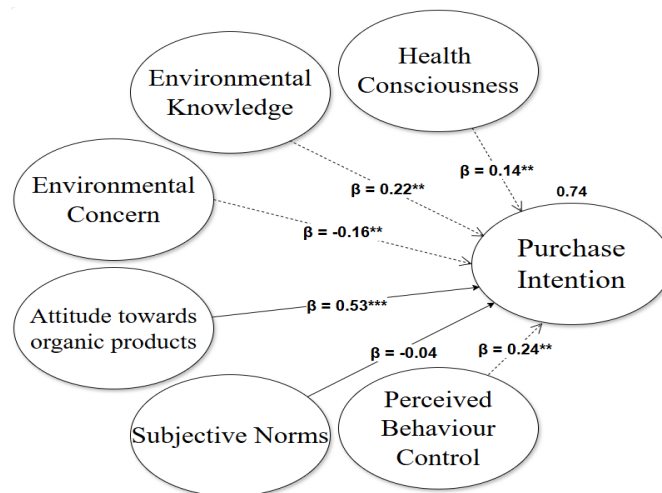


Figure 2: Structural model

Note: **Significant at the 0.05 level, ***Significant at the 0.01 level

Source: Own elaboration

Table 4 represents the results of the proposed structural relationships that were used to address the six hypotheses formulated for the study.

Table 4. Standardised regression estimates and p-values

Constructs	β	SE	p	Hypothesis
Health consciousness → purchase intention	0.144	.066	.036**	Supported
Environmental knowledge → purchase intention	0.220	.104	.015**	Supported
Environmental concern → purchase intention	-0.158	.091	.018**	Not supported
Attitude toward organic food → purchase intention	0.533	.060	***	Supported
Subjective norms → purchase intention	-0.044	.060	.499	Not supported
Perceived behavioural control → purchase intention	0.243	.120	.007**	Supported
β : standardised beta coefficient; SE: standardised error; **Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level, ***Significant at the $p < 0.01$ level				

Source: Own elaboration

Four of the six proposed regression path hypotheses were supported. These findings indicate that health consciousness ($\beta = 0.144$, $p = 0.036 < 0.05$), environmental knowledge ($\beta = 0.220$, $p = 0.015 < 0.05$), attitude towards organic products ($\beta = 0.533$, $p = 0.000 < 0.01$), and perceived behavioural control ($\beta = 0.243$, $p = 0.007 < 0.05$) have statistically positive influences on the purchase intentions of South

African Generation Y consumers' regarding organic food product adoption. Surprisingly, the path of environmental concern ($\beta = 0.158$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) showed a negative yet significant relationship with organic food purchases. Lastly, subjective norms recorded a negative and non-significant path towards organic food purchase intentions ($\beta = -0.044$, $p = 0.499 > 0.01$). Amongst the independent factors, attitude towards organic food products was found to have the largest impact on Generation Y consumers' propensity to adopt organic food products. The lowest, yet still significant, was health consciousness on purchase intentions. The calculated squared multiple correlation of purchase intentions amounted to 0.74. Therefore, the six independent factors of the model accounted for 74 percent of the variance for Generation Y consumers' organic food purchase intentions in South Africa. The findings indicate that health consciousness, environmental knowledge, attitude towards organic products and perceived behavioural control significantly shape purchase intentions for South African Generation Y consumers.

Discussion

The study findings show that H_1 , H_2 and H_6 are all accepted on the 0.05 level. Generation Y consumers feel that health consciousness, environmental knowledge and perceived behavioural control all influence their propensity to purchase organic food products. These results align with prior studies conducted by Bazhanm, Sabet and Borumandnia (2024), Pan and Wu (2024) and Kamboj et al. (2023), who all found these independent factors to influence purchase intentions of organic food products positively. Unsurprisingly, the strongest predictor was attitudes towards organic products towards purchase intention. As such, H_4 was accepted at the 0.01 level. Attitudes are a common predictor of purchase intention, as a favourable attitude towards a product will most likely result in a purchase of that product for any age group. The same can be said for Generation Y consumers' intentions to purchase organic food products in South Africa. This sentiment is supported by several studies (Pan and Wu, 2024; Chetioui et al., 2023; Ferreira and Pereira, 2023; Harjadi and Gunardi 2023; Su et al., 2022.).

Despite prior literature providing strong arguments favouring the relationship between environmental concern and purchase intentions (Simanjuntak et al., 2023), this was not the case in the context of this study. H_3 is rejected on this basis. However, the study's findings show a significant negative effect. This implies that Generation Y consumers in South Africa do not feel that environmental concern would increase their propensity to purchase organic food products. Generation Y consumers may consider personal health (health consciousness) a more significant factor than the physical natural environment when purchasing organic food products. In the study on a developing nation by Bazhan et al. (2024), the authors found environmental concern not to impact attitudes directly. This supports the notion that consumers do not associate personal factors when purchasing organic food with the physical environment.

Contrary to our expectations and prior literature, the structural path from subjective norms to purchase intentions was insignificant ($p = 0.499$). As such, H_5 is not supported and, therefore, rejected. This finding suggests that South African Generation Y consumers consider adopting organic food products as an individualistic action rather than a decision based on the social pressures of society. Bazhan et al. (2024) concur and state that purchasing organic food products may not be a social norm in some countries. Qi, Mou, Meng and Ploeger (2023) and Zayed et al (2022) confirm this as their studies conducted in the developing countries of India and China found subjective norms not to influence organic food purchase intentions, as was the case for this study. The significant path of perceived behavioural control may be the reason for this. South African Generation Y consumers may perceive that organic food products are readily available all over the country and, as such, may not feel social pressure to purchase these products.

Managerial Implications

The results of this study serve to assist retailers, organisations and regulatory agencies in compiling appropriate strategies concerning organic food products. Consumers have emphasised the importance of individual health in various studies (Chetoui et al., 2023; Parashar et al., 2022; Su et al., 2022; Tandon et al., 2021). As such, marketers must highlight the health benefits that organic food products provide. This may be in the form of stating the high nutritious content attained from organic food or stating the importance of food production containing no harmful chemicals. This can be achieved by producing educational content via social media, blogs, vlogs or in-store promotions emphasising the link between organic food products and healthier lifestyles. This would ultimately increase consumers' environmental knowledge. Creating marketing campaigns based on educating consumers about ethical farming practices could improve the transparency of organic farming and, thus, organic food production. This may strengthen brand loyalty of organic food brands and increase product switching from conventional food products to organic food products. Marketers can also increase consumers' attitudes towards organic food products by showcasing positive testimonials and endorsements from satisfied customers or health experts. This would aid in creating positive perceptions of organic food products. A possible manner to achieve this would be to associate or partner up organic food product brands with environmental organisations, such as Greenpeace, WWF food initiatives and the like. In addition, South African Generation Y consumers felt that organic products are readily available to them so marketers could consider strategies to further support their product adoption by offering discounts, brand loyalty schemes and expanding distribution channels to capture a larger market segment.

Environmental concern conventionally coincides with pro-environmental purchase behaviour. This was not the case for this study. A potential cause for this may be scepticism and greenwashing from prior environmental movements. Marketers must then educate consumers and employ transparent campaigns regarding organic food products. This study found organic food product purchasing to be individualistic,

suggesting that younger South African consumers do not see organic food purchasing as a social norm. Marketers could produce social media campaigns to increase the visibility of organic food products and create positive word-of-mouth marketing. The South African Generation Y consumer is important to all organisations and marketers looking to penetrate the organic food market. These individuals are health conscious and to capture this segment, they must be met on their social media platforms. Marketers would find it beneficial to create social media campaigns focused on organic food products' health benefits to increase product adoption from this cohort.

Limitations of the Study

This study provides important feedback to the academic community. However, it is not without shortcomings that can be improved for future research. The study was conducted in South Africa, a developing country, so the results cannot be generalised to other countries. The study itself investigated organic food products, which is a loose or broad term. Future research could investigate organic food product categories, such as dairy products, vegetables, ethical meat processing practices and the like. Furthermore, this study analysed the Generation Y cohort, whose disposable income may not be as substantial as its predecessors and, as such, may see organic food products as luxury items. The research design for this study was quantitative in nature and cross-sectional. Therefore, the study lacks detailed qualitative research insights from longitudinal in-depth interviews. Finally, only the consumer perspective was analysed in the study. Future studies may find it pertinent to investigate the opinions of food producers, especially in developing countries such as South Africa.

Conclusion

Given the persistent threat that humans pose to the environment, humans have shifted how they strive to improve their personal self-health. This is evident in their purchase intentions concerning organic food purchases. The more human beings possess pro-environmental purchase intentions, the more likely they will be able to reduce the degree of environmental stress they pose for the environment and natural ecosystems. This study aimed to model the factors that influence the purchase intentions of Generation Y consumers within the South African consumer market regarding organic food products.

The findings indicate that health consciousness, environmental knowledge, attitude towards organic products and perceived behavioural control significantly shape purchase intentions for South African Generation Y consumers. Generation Y consumers feel that health consciousness, environmental knowledge and perceived behavioural control all influence their propensity to purchase organic food products. Unsurprisingly, the strongest predictor towards purchase intention was attitudes towards organic products. The findings imply that Generation Y consumers in South Africa do not feel environmental concern would increase their propensity to purchase organic food products. Generation Y consumers may consider personal health

(health consciousness) a more significant factor than the physical natural environment when purchasing organic food products. Furthermore, the findings suggest that South African Generation Y consumers consider adopting organic food products as an individualistic action rather than a decision based on the social pressures of society. Consequently, South African Generation Y consumers may perceive that organic food products are readily available all over the country and, as such, may not feel social pressure to purchase these products.

References

- Ajzen, I., (1991). The Theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179-211.
- Almossawi, M., (2014). Promoting green purchase behavior to the youth (case of Bahrain). *British Journal of Marketing Studies*, 2(16), 1-16.
- Asare-Bediako, T., (2015). Advantages and Disadvantages of Organic Foods. <https://discover.hubpages.com/food/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-organic-foods>.
- Bazhan, M., Shafiei Sabet, F. and Borumandnia, N., (2024). Factors affecting purchase intention of organic food products: Evidence from a developing nation context. *Food Science and Nutrition*, 12(5), 3469-3482.
- Bevan-Dye, A. L., Suruijlal, J., (2011). Attitudes towards materialism in sport and materialism tendencies amongst black Generation Y students. *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance*, 1(1), 43-55.
- Bhalla, D., (2020). Organic Food Industry: 4 Reasons Why It Will Boom In Coming Years. <https://food.ndtv.com/health/organic-food-4-reasons-why-the-industry-will-boom-in-coming-years-2168548>.
- Brookes, E., (2023). The Theory of Planned Behavior: Behavioral Intention. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/theory-of-planned-behavior.html>
- Cherry, K., (2021). Attitudes and Behavior in Psychology. <https://www.verywellmind.com/attitudes-how-they-form-change-shape-behavior-2795897>
- Cheng, M., (2022). 8 Characteristics of Millennials That Support Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). <https://www.forbes.com/sites/margueritacheng/2019/06/19/8-characteristics-of-millennials-that-support-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs>
- Chetioui, Y., Butt, I., Lebdaoui, H., Neville, M. G. and El Bouzidi, L., (2023). Exploring consumers' attitude and intent to purchase organic food in an emerging market context: a pre-/post COVID-19 pandemic analysis. *British Food Journal*, 125(11), 3979-4001.
- Dziuba, S., Szczyrba, A., (2023). Agile management in Polish organic food processing enterprises. *Production Engineering Archives*, 29(1), 101-107.
- Eastman, J. K., Liu, J., (2012). The impact of generational cohorts on status consumption: an exploratory look at generational cohort and demographics on status consumption. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 29(2), 93-102.
- Ferreira, S., Pereira, O., (2023). Antecedents of consumers' intention and behavior to purchase organic food in the Portuguese context. *Sustainability*, 15(12),9670.

- Fielding, K., McDonald, R. and Louis, W. R., (2008). Theory of planned behaviour, identity and intentions to engage in environmental activism. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 28(4), 318–326.
- Fornell, C., Larcker, D. F., (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39-50.
- Gray, S.G., Raimi, K.T., Wilson, R. and Árvai, J., (2019). Will Millennials save the world? The effect of age and generational differences on environmental concern. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 242(1), 394-402.
- Hair, J., Black, W., Babin, B. and Anderson, R., (2014). *Multivariate data analysis*. 7th ed. Harlow, Essex: Pearson.
- Ham, M., Jeger, M. and Frajman, A., (2015). The role of subjective norms in forming the intention to purchase green food. *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 28(1), 738–748.
- Hansmann, R., Baur, I. and Binder, C. R., (2020). Increasing organic food consumption: An integrating model of drivers and barriers. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 275(123058), 1-18.
- Harjadi, D., Gunardi, A., (2022). Factors affecting eco-friendly purchase intention: subjective norms and ecological consciousness as moderators. *Cogent Business and Management*, 9, 1-16.
- Heo, J., Muralidharan, S., (2019). What triggers young Millennials to purchase eco-friendly products: the interrelationships among knowledge, perceived consumer effectiveness, and environmental concern. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 25(4), 421-437.
- Junsawang, S., Chaiyasoonthorn, W., Urbański, M. and Chaveesuk, S. (2022). How to Shift Consumer Willingness to Use the Emerging Technologies On Omnichannel. *Montenegrin Journal of Economics*, 18(3), 183-196.
- Kamboj, S, Matharu, M. and Gupta, M., (2023). Examining consumer purchase intention towards organic food: An empirical study. *Cleaner and Responsible Consumption*, 9(100121), 1-10.
- Kim, Y., Choi, S. M., (2005). Antecedents of green purchase behavior: An examination of collectivism, environmental concern, and PCE. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 32, 592.
- Liang, R. D., (2016). Predicting intentions to purchase organic food: the moderating effects of organic food prices. *British Food Journal*, 118(1), 183-199.
- Luger, M., Hofer, K. M. and Floh, A., (2022). Support for corporate social responsibility among generation Y consumers in advanced versus emerging markets. *International Business Review*, 31(101903), 1-12.
- Malhotra, N. K., (2010). *Marketing Research: An Applied Orientation*. 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Markert, J., (2004). Demographic of age: Generational and cohort confusion. *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 26(2), 11-25.
- Mostafa, M. M., (2007). A hierarchical analysis of the green consciousness of the Egyptian consumer. *Psychology and Marketing*, 24(5), 445-473.
- Pallant, J., (2013). *A step by step guide to data analysis using IBM SPSS: SPSS survival manual*. 5th ed. Maidenhead: Open University/McGraw-Hill.
- Pan, J., Wu, K. S., (2024). A sequential mediation model for the effect of food safety consciousness on the intention to purchase organic food. *Front. Sustain. Food Sys*, 8(1402286), 1-10.

- Parashar, D., Singh, S. and Sood, G., (2022). Examining the role of health consciousness, environmental awareness and intention on purchase of organic food: A moderated model of attitude. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 386(5), 135553.
- Paul, J., Rana, J., (2012). Consumer behavior and purchase intention for organic food. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 29(6), 412-422.
- Polonsky, M. J., Vocino, A., Grau, S. L., Garma, R. and Ferdous, A. S., (2012). The impact of general and carbon-related environmental knowledge on attitudes and behaviour of US consumers. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 28(3-4), 238-263.
- Qi, X., Mou, J., Meng, C. and Ploeger, A., (2023). Factors influencing consumers' organic food continuous purchase intentions during the post-pandemic era: An empirical investigation in China. *Foods*, 12(8), 1636.
- Sedera, R. M. H., Putra, R. M., Saputra, E. K. and Ali, M. A., (2023). Organic Food: The Factors Influencing Consumers' Purchasing Intention. *Journal of Theory and Applied Management*, 16(2), 254-265.
- Shukla, P., (2008). Essentials of marketing research. Ventus Publishing. <http://bookboon.com/en/business-ebooks/marketing-ebooks/essentials-of-marketing-research-part-ii>.
- Simanjuntak, M., Nafila, N. L., Yuliati, L. N., Johan, I. R., Najib, M. and Sabri, F. M., (2023). Environmental Care Attitudes and Intention to Purchase Green Products: Impact of Environmental Knowledge, Word of Mouth, and Green Marketing. *Sustainability*, 15(5445), 1-16.
- Singh, A., Verma, P., (2017). Factors influencing Indian consumers' actual buying behaviour towards organic food products. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 167(1), 473-483.
- South Africa Online., (2021). Organic Farming in South Africa. <https://southafrica.co.za/organicfarming-south-africa.html>.
- Statistics South Africa., (2024). Mid-year population estimates: 2024. Key indicators, Statistical release P0302. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0302/P03022024.pdf>.
- Streimikiene, D. (2024). Western Balkan Countries in Green Transition: Assessment of Results and Challenges. *Montenegrin Journal of Economics*, 20(4), 203-212.
- Strydom, C., Meyer, N. and Synodinos, C., (2021). South African Generation Y students' intention towards ecopreneurship. *Acta Commercii - Independent Research Journal in the Management Sciences*, 12(1), 1-12.
- Su, Y., Khaskheli, A., Raza, S. A. and Yousufi, S. Q., (2022). How health consciousness and social consciousness affect young consumers purchase intention towards organic foods. *Management of Environmental Quality: An International Journal*, 33(5), 1249-1270.
- Szczepańska-Woszczyńska, K., Thirakulwanich, A. and Kot, S., (2024). Modern Green Hotels Initiatives from Guests Perspective. *Journal of Tourism and Services*, 15(28), 285-304.
- Tandon, A., Jabeen, F., Talwar, S., Sakashita, M. and Dhir, A., (2021). Facilitators and inhibitors of organic food buying behaviour. *Food Quality and Preference*, 88(104077), 1-14.
- Voorhees, C.M., Brady, M.K., Calantone, R. and Ramirez, E., (2016). Discriminant validity testing in marketing: an analysis, causes for concern, and proposed remedies. *Journal of the Academy Marketing Science*, 44(1), 119-134.
- Wang, J., Wang, P. L. and Dang, V. T., (2020). Environmental consciousness and organic food purchase intention: moderated mediation a model of perceived food quality and price sensitivity. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(3), 850.

- Wolfson, J., (2019). Are organic foods healthier? <https://thedrswolfson.com/are-organic-foodshealthier/>
- Yadav, R., Pathack, G. S., (2016). Young consumers' intention towards buying green products in a developing nation: Extending the theory of planned behaviour. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 135(1), 732-739.
- Yin, S., Wu, L., Du, L. and Chen, M., (2010). Consumers' purchase intention of organic food in China. *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*, 90(8), 1361-1367.
- Zahari, A. R., Esa, E., (2016). Motivation to Adopt Renewable Energy among Generation Y. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 35(1), 444-453.
- Zayed, M. F., Gaber, H. R. and El Essawi, N., (2022). Examining the Factors That Affect Consumers Purchase Intention of Organic Food Products in a Developing Country. *Sustainability*, 14(5868), 1-16.
- Zsóka, A., Szerényi, Z. M., Széchy, A. and Kocsis, T., (2013). Greening due to environmental education? Environmental knowledge, attitudes, consumer behavior and everyday pro-environmental activities of Hungarian high school and university students. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 48(1), 126-138.

PRZECHODZENIE NA EKOLOGIĘ: ANALIZA PRZEJŚCIA POKOLENIA Y W KIERUNKU ŻYWNOSCI ORGANICZNEJ W REPUBLICE POŁUDNIOWEJ AFRYKI

Streszczenie: W obliczu rosnącego globalnego zapotrzebowania na żywność organiczną, Republika Południowej Afryki odnotowała wzrost popytu zarówno na bardziej bezpieczne i zrównoważone praktyki organizacyjne, jak i na produkty organiczne. W związku z rosnącym popytem na produkty organiczne można przypuszczać, że ceny tych produktów powinny zacząć spadać, co jednocześnie zwiększy liczbę zakupów produktów organicznych. Intencje zakupowe konsumentów w odniesieniu do produktów organicznych mogą być kształtowane przez ich świadomość zdrowotną, posiadaną wiedzę na temat środowiska, wynikającą z niej troskę o środowisko, postawy wobec produktów organicznych, normy subiektywne oraz postrzeganą kontrolę behawioralną. Celem badania było określenie czynników wpływających na intencje zakupowe pokolenia Y w Republice Południowej Afryki w kontekście żywności organicznej. Próba badawcza obejmowała 500 konsumentów z pokolenia Y, pochodzących ze wszystkich dziewięciu prowincji RPA. Dane zostały zebrane za pośrednictwem organizacji zajmującej się badaniami rynkowymi. Grupa docelowa badania obejmowała południowoafrykańskich konsumentów z pokolenia Y w wieku od 18 do 35 lat. Zgodnie z wynikami, świadomość zdrowotna, wiedza ekologiczna, postawy wobec produktów organicznych oraz postrzegana kontrola behawioralna pozytywnie wpływają na intencje zakupowe żywności organicznej. Natomiast normy subiektywne nie miały istotnego wpływu. Co ciekawe, troska o środowisko wśród konsumentów pokolenia Y negatywnie wpływała na intencje zakupowe żywności organicznej. Wyniki te są nieco zaskakujące, gdyż w pewnych aspektach stoją w sprzeczności z literaturą przedmiotu. Dlatego południowoafrykańscy marketerzy i organizacje mogą potrzebować ponownego przemyślenia swojej oferty produktów organicznych dla tej grupy konsumentów.

Słowa kluczowe: Republika Południowej Afryki, pokolenie Y, intencje zakupowe, żywność organiczna